

Role of Educational Stakeholders in Promoting Inclusive Education

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Abstract

The notion of Inclusive Education is gaining popularity day by day. It is a student-centric approach that tends to ensure equality for all students with or without any form of disabilities in accessing educational opportunities at different levels. Several relevant policy measures are adopted by both the Governments towards successful inclusion of disabled students in mainstream education. Despite of such initiatives, the accessibility of the disabled students to regular schools gets hindered due to various socio-economic and political causes. In order to bring about total inclusion in education system, active participation of educational stakeholders is very much necessary. Hence, it is imperative to study the involvement of different education stakeholders in developing suitable strategies and encouraging quality education for addressing the diverse needs of the students with disabilities. Based on various secondary data, the present paper aims to explore the major roles of educational stakeholders for the promotion of inclusive education efficiently in the country. Finally, the author suggests some important recommendations based on the study findings to amplify the implementation of inclusive education in a sustainable manner.

Keywords: *Inclusive Education, Educational Stakeholders, Role of Educational Stakeholders, Recommendations*

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I. Introduction

Inclusive education is an innovative educational practice that allows every student irrespective of their differences in socio-economic backgrounds, cultural aspects, and any form of disabilities to avail equal opportunities in education. It is specifically designed to meet the individual needs of all the students in mainstream education by adopting necessary strategies. Several programmes and measures are being adopted by the government to enhance the welfare of the disabled individuals through proper education. Quality education may benefit and empower the disabled students to uplift their existing condition for better living. One of the major aims of inclusive education is to ensure equality for all students in access to every aspect of educational facilities. In order to materialize this aim in true sense, the cooperation of all stakeholders towards the implementation of inclusive education is very much necessary. Inclusive education can be implemented successfully if the stakeholders at different levels play a positive role in changing the prevalent negative attitudes from the society.

Meaning of Inclusive Education

According to UNESCO (1994), the very notion of inclusive education revolves around the idea of equality and equity for students with disabilities in education along with other students without disabilities to experience the benefits of a regular school. Inclusive education tends to cater the diverse learning needs of all students through provision of necessary accommodation in educational setups. This may enable the students with disabilities to gather full and sound school experiences for their better academic achievement. Inclusive education mainly emphasizes on the provisions of basic educational conditions and learning support for disabled students within the regular school environment in order to attain the desired learning outcomes.

The World Declaration on Education for All (1990) envisages importance of the Universal Access to Education meant for all children. It also aims to promote equity by providing the educational opportunities and recognizing the essential educational resources for removing any form of barriers faced by the children in

receiving education. Inclusive education is based on the idea of togetherness that aims to bring all children with and without disabilities in similar classroom. It helps to address the individuals' learning requirements through proper identification of their strengths and weaknesses. The Salamanca Statement is considered to be one of the major steps towards promotion of inclusive education across the world.

Stakeholders of Inclusive Education

In order to implement inclusive education effectively in the society, the involvement and cooperation of different stakeholders at various level cannot be ignored. Stakeholders are those persons who possess personal interest in promoting and implementing inclusive education for the welfare of all students as well as of the society. They are accountable for bringing about essential transformation in the existing education system for the benefit of all. Hence, the role of stakeholders in bringing about inclusivity in the society is very remarkable. They include regular school teachers, school administrative heads, local community, parents, government and non-government organizations.

Role of Regular School Teachers in Promoting Inclusive Education

The main responsibility of regular school teachers is to provide congenial environment for the overall development and academic achievement of all students. The role of the teachers is discussed below:

1. The teachers must ensure equal educational opportunities to all and address their individual learning requirements judiciously.
2. It is one of the major duties of the teachers to develop an inclusive atmosphere in regular classroom. This will enable students to learn and act effectively according to their capabilities.
3. In order to create inclusive environment, it is necessary to create an individual education plan specially for the students with disabilities according to their strengths and weaknesses.
4. Judiciously implementing the individual education plan for students better learning outcomes.
5. Establishing collaborative learning and cooperative learning in the regular classroom where students can participate actively in educational activities.
6. Teachers must encourage students to participate in co-curricular activities besides their other subjects of study so that the students may acquire several learning skills.
7. The teachers must establish favorable relationships with all students, be impartial towards all and do not encourage any sorts of discrimination in the classroom.
8. It is required by the teachers to adopt necessary teaching-learning strategies for the effective delivery of the course content, maintain continuous and comprehensive evaluation for all students with or without disabilities.

Role of School Administrative Heads in Promoting Inclusive Education

The school administrative heads play a very significant role in the process of implementation of any educational programmes and measures that are favorable for the students. The effective implementation of inclusive education in regular schools is however dependent on the positive roles played by the school administrators specially by the Head of the Institution or Principal of the concerned school. The role of the school administrative heads is discussed below:

1. Adopting the necessary transformation for promoting inclusive education in regular school.
2. Following the guidelines of inclusive education and thereby implement those in order to facilitate inclusive learning atmosphere.
3. Developing rules and practices in school that are non-discriminatory in nature.
4. Establishing a bias-free environment conducive for students learning.
5. Adopting appropriate measures for universalization of education for all and hence, make necessary arrangement for enrollment of students with disabilities.
6. Arranging orientation programme for teachers to develop their inclusive classroom management skills.
7. Providing essential infrastructures, learning resources and other educational assistance, training programmes for teachers, appointment of special educators for successful implementation of inclusive education in regular school.
8. Maintaining the quality of education to be imparted for all students regardless of their individual differences.

Role of Parents in Promoting Inclusive Education

The involvement of parents in education of their children can be regarded as an important indicator for students' academic achievement. Parents play a very significant role in their children academic career. It is the awareness of the parents that enables students to receive proper education for their overall development. The role of parents in promoting inclusive education in the society are discussed below:

1. The parents must be fully aware about the existing government acts and various legal rights that may benefit their children in learning.
2. They must identify their children's disabilities, strengths, and weaknesses properly.
3. They must take necessary steps for their children to receive quality education.
4. Parents must participate in any welfare and developmental programmes arranged by the school organizations.
5. They must report their children's diverse learning needs to the teachers.
6. The parents must observe their children's academic performance and help them to upgrade their progress gradually.
7. They must ensure to provide the basic technical aids for effective learning of their students.
8. Parents must encourage their children to engage in various school activities with other students.
9. It is necessary to consult the school teachers especially the class teachers by the parents to discuss about their children's academic progress and any other shortcomings that hinders their growth and development.

Role of Local Community in Promoting Inclusive Education

In the developing country like India, the role played by the community at the local level for the welfare and betterment of all is of immense importance. The effective implementation of inclusive education is not possible without the active participation and coordination of local community with the local schools and other organizations. The role of the community is discussed below:

1. It is one of the prime responsibilities of the community to identify the children with special needs of the locality and nearby adjoining areas.
2. The local community must play an important role in raising the awareness of the families having children with disabilities about the rights of the persons with disabilities.
3. Community must take measures to address the diverse needs of the children with disabilities by utilizing common resources optimally.
4. The local community may act as an active member of the local schools and other non-governmental organizations for making any essential arrangements and accommodation to the disabled students.
5. In order to ensure full inclusion in the society, the local community may perform certain important tasks related to procurement of educational resources, providing supportive devices to the disabled students, conducting campaigns for increasing awareness of the people.

Role of the Government at the National and State Level in Promoting Inclusive Education

In India, the important government agencies that look after the development and welfare of the persons with disabilities include the **Ministry of Human resource Development, National Disability Councils** and the other notable one is the **Ministry of social Justice and Empowerment**. The **Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) Scheme** has been launched by the Government of India in order to promote inclusive educational opportunities for the children with special needs. These central government organizations are responsible for the legislation of several developmental plans and policies as well as of their implementation through the government working in the state. The major role of the government towards promotion of inclusive education is discussed below:

1. Formulation of innovative policies, plans, programmes for the upliftment and betterment of the students with disabilities.
2. Identifying the growing needs of the students with disabilities.
3. Legislating necessary measures for the establishment of inclusive education in regular schools.
4. Providing appropriate guidelines to the school administrators and authorities, curriculum framers, teachers for facilitating inclusive environment in regular schools.
5. Providing financial as well as other assistive devices to the disabled students in order to encourage them in mainstream education.
6. Making proper arrangements for the professional development of the teachers as well as special education for bringing about better learning outcomes of all the students in inclusive setup.
7. The government play a significant role in encouraging researches related to various aspects of inclusive education.

Role of Non-Governmental Agencies in Promoting Inclusive Education

The Non-Governmental Agencies and other private organizations are some groups that work voluntarily to attain certain common goal of the community. These include Disability service Providers that aims to provide rehabilitation services, essential health services etc. The NGOs and such other agencies like **Make a Difference, Sightsavers, Teach for India, Bharatiya Jain Sangathana (BJS)** play significant role in promoting inclusive education in the society. These include:

1. NGOs play an important role in realizing the significance of inclusive education in present days.

2. They conduct several awareness raising programmes in consultation with the local communities, school authorities, and other government run agencies.
3. They assist the other educational stakeholders in adopting essential teaching-learning strategies for the disabled students.
4. They help in acquiring necessary information related to the present needs and requirements, problems of the students with disabilities.
5. They also organize different camps such as beneficiary camps specially meant for providing benefits to the disabled students, camps for early identification of children's any form of benchmark disability.

Recommendations for Promoting Inclusive Education

1. **Legislation of appropriate policies:** Proper policies and plans must be framed in order to address the emerging issues of inclusive education. Such policies and programmes are needed to be student-centric and democratic in nature aiming to ensure equal educational opportunities for all students regardless of their individual differences.
2. **Organization of relevant training programmes and workshops:** This may enable the teachers as well as special educators to adopt appropriate teaching strategies according to the students diverse learning needs and their capabilities. Training and workshop programmes help the teachers to acquire certain teaching skills necessary for inclusive classroom management and controlling the unpredictable behavior of the students in regular classroom. These also help the teachers to monitor the students academic performance through the maintenance of continuous evaluation.
3. **Coordination with educational ministries, school administrators, local authorities:** The inclusive education programme cannot be implemented successfully without the essential cooperation and coordination of different educational ministries, school administrators, local community at national, regional and local level. Such educational stakeholders play key role in the formulation of developmental programmes, planning process and the execution of such plans in sustainable manner.
4. **Designing proper curriculum for inclusive education practice:** In order to facilitate proper inclusion programme in the society, it is very much needed to promote inclusive education in the existing schools. This may happen after the adoption of appropriate curriculum suitable to enhance inclusive education practice in regular schools. The curriculum framers must consider the present learning needs of the students with and without disabilities while designing the curriculum for inclusive education.
5. **Encouraging schools to follow the guidelines of inclusive education:** The schools must be encouraged by both the governments and other private organizations to observe the guidelines mentioned in several policies and acts towards the promotion of inclusive education in the country. The schools must be provided with adequate educational resources and finance so that they may provide sufficient support services to the disabled students in receiving quality education.
6. **Development of different projects for promoting inclusive education:** The various government and non-government organizations must development welfare projects for the upliftment of the students with disabilities. Such projects may cater to the present requirements of the disabled students, rehabilitation services, educational and employment of such students.
7. **Undertaking action-research at various levels of education:** Undertaking action research on various aspects of students with disabilities and inclusive education may enable the policy makers to identify their major challenges in contemporary situation. This also help to understand the present status of the implementation of inclusive education at different levels.
8. **Arrangements for more awareness campaigns:** Awareness campaigns may help to identify the benchmark disabilities of the children in the society so that early treatments may be arranged for the concerned children in proper way.
9. **Allocation of resources:** The implementation of inclusive education needs proper and judicious allocation of educational resources to the students with diverse learning needs. The government must allocate necessary budget for the promotion of inclusive education in the country.
10. **Provision for proper supportive services and financial assistance:** The students with disabilities require certain assistive devices and supportive services for their better learning outcomes. The government must provide necessary arrangements and financial assistance so that the students with disabilities may access equal educational opportunities and other facilities without any hindrances.

II. Conclusion

Inclusive education is an innovative student-centric educational approach that aims to ensure education for all irrespective of their socio-economic backgrounds and any form of disabilities. It also emphasizes upon universalization of education at different levels. It envisages an education system where students with disabilities learn together with the normal students without disabilities in regular classroom. The success of such

education practice requires continuous cooperation, collaboration, planning, participation, support of various educational stakeholders. Without the necessary efforts of such stakeholders, the notion of inclusive education may lose its actual motion in reality. Therefore, the roles played by the educational stakeholders are very much noteworthy in facilitating improved inclusive education programmes.

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